

[Adventures of a Dynamiter]

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Major, Lettie, PW; Wichita Falls, Texas

Words 350

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"I wouldn't be afraid in the least to take a pint of nitroglycerine place it [?] in a glass bottle, and thow it down on the side walk from the top of the city national bank building[md]and I'm not planning on dying soon either.

The above startling statement was made by a veteran dynamiter of Wichita Falls, Tom W. [Mendenhall?] (affectionately called "Old Tommy by oil field workers)

Notice thatold Tommy specifies a glass bottle. "If I took a pint of nitro and put it in tin containers following the same procedure I'd soon be knocking at the pearly gates."

Mr. [Mendenhall?] has been in the business forty-five years, having formed his first dynamite company in 1895. He was driving those days, a pair of pure bred horses from Kentucky, of which he is more proud, he declares, than he is in 1938, of his modern steam line equipment.

One day while driving to a well, the tin containers in which he was carrying nitroglycerine sprung a leak. Arriving at his destination, he discovered that he had lost 20 quarts of the fluid-enough to blow up the down section of Wichita Falls. It is friction that causes nitro to explode. That is why it is dangerous to carry it in tin containers, says Mr. [Mendenhall?]. The old belief that a jar or bump makes nitro explode is all foolishness. If that were so, we couldn't haul it from place to place.

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I can remember as well as if it were yesterday, one time in Carol, West Virginia. I had about 15 quarts of nitro in the end of the wagon in tin containers, but fixed very securely in wooden boxes. The horses ran over a steep cliff about 400 feet deep. As soon as he went over the edge of the road, I jumped from the wagon. 2 "About half way down the cliff, I stopped rolling, but the horses and wagon and explosive were still going. I crawled to the edge of the cliff and looked over. The horses were dead and the wagon demolished. I put my hands over my ears, but no explosion followed.

"It was a different matter when I set off thenitro cans in Wichita Falls. I had someold empties that I thought were dangerous to leave around. So I placed them up on the hill and set a slow match. I hurried down the hill to a safe place, but as I looked back I saw an old sow and a bunch of pigs approaching the cans. I hollered at them and threw rocks but they wouldn't go away. They kept rooting aroundtill the cans exploded—Boy! I never saw such a rain of pork. I had sausage and pork steak for weeks.